

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04523 081829Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 081800Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3792

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4523

EXDIS

FOR NE/ATHERTON, SAUNDERS AND KORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OEXC (IMAM MUSA AL-SADR) AL-

SUBJECT: IV NOMINATION FOR IMAM MUSA/SADR

REF: STATE TELS 078364 AND 077919

1. I FIND REFTELS INCOMPREHENSIBLE. EVER SINCE I HAVE BEEN IN BEIRUT WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING THE IMAM MUSA AL-SADR AS AN IV NOMINEE. WE HAVE KEPT THE DEPARTMENT COMPLETELY INFORMED ON ALL DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MATTER. IF WE WERE TO WELSH AT THIS POINT AND POSTPONE OR CANCEL IMAM'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, WE WOULD ELIMINATE OUR CREDIBILITY IN A LARGE SECTOR OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY. NO MATTER HOW WE WOULD TRY TO SUGAR THE PILL, OUR ENEMIES, THE IMAM'S ENEMIES AND OTHER POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN THIS COUNTRY WOULD HAVE A DONNYBROOK AND THE ONLY REAL LOSER WOULD BE UNCLE SAM. THE ONLY WAY TO MITIGATE SUCH A DISASTER WOULD BE FOR US TO ADMIT THAT THE SHAH OF IRAN IS ALLOWED TO DETERMINE WHAT LEBANESE TRAVEL TO THE U.S. THEREFORE WE ARE WITHDRAWING THIS INVITATION.

2. AS YOU KNOW, THE IMAM IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE HALF DOZEN MOST INFLUENTIAL MEN IN THE LEBANON TODAY. HE HAS JUST BEEN REELECTED (UNTIL 1992) PRESIDENT OF
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THE SUPREME ISLAMIC SHI'ITE COUNCIL, A POSITION FROM

WHICH HE EXERCISES POLITICAL CONTROL OF LEBANON'S SECOND LARGEST RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY. HE HAS RECENTLY VISITED SAUDI ARABIA TO PRESENT THE SHI'A COMMUNITY'S CONDOLENCES ON KING FEISAL'S DEATH AND WAS SEEN OFF AT THE AIRPORT BY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND WAS RECEIVED ON HIS RETURN THE SAME HONORS. PRESIDENT FRANGIE CALLED ON HIM LAST WEEK TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON HIS ELECTION, AN HONOR WHICH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC HERETOFORE HAS ONLY PAID TO THE MARONITE PATRIARCH.

3. I AM OF COURSE FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THE IRANIAN VIEW OF THE IMAM, BUT I THOUGHT THIS PROBLEM HAD BEEN THRASHED OUT SOME TIME AGO AND IT WAS ONLY WITH SPECIFIC AUTHORIZATION FROM THE DEPARTMENT THAT I HAVE CONTINUED TO INDICATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO ACCORD HIM AN IV GRANT. ON THIS LATTER POINT, PLEASE SEE EMBTEL 4510, WHICH I DICTATED PRIOR TO SEEING REFTELS. I SHALL BE LUNCHING WITH CHAMOUN AND VICTOR MOUSSA THURSDAY, APRIL 10 AND WILL HAVE FURTHER INFORMATION AS TO THE DETAILS OF THE IMAM'S LUNCH YESTERDAY WITH IRANIAN AMBASSADOR.
GODLEY

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